

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EGEN, ETRD, PFOR, BGEN, JO
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE JORDANIAN BOYCOTT OF WESTINGHOUSE

REF: (A) AMMAN 6830, (B) STATE 296644, (C) AMMAN 7342

1. AMBASSADOR TOOK OPPORTUNITY OF DECEMBER 26 INTRODUCTORY
CALL ON NEW MINISTER OF FINANCE, MOHAMMAD DABBAS, TO
PURSUE ISSUE OF POSSIBLE JORDANIAN BOYCOTT OF WESTINGHOUSE.
LETTER FROM JORDAN'S BOYCOTT OFFICE (WHICH WE HAVE NOT
SEEN) APPARENTLY COVERED THREE SEPARATE ISSUES, ONE OF
WHICH WAS REQUEST FOR INFORMATION REGARDING ANY WESTINGHOUSE
DISCUSSIONS WITH ISRAELI EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON CONCERNING
NUCLEAR POWER PLANT FOR ISRAEL. DABBAS ADVISED AMBASSADOR
THAT THIS REQUEST FOR INFORMATION SHOULD NOT BE VIEWED
AS THREAT OF IMPOSITION OF BOYCOTT BY JORDAN. DABBAS
FURTHER STATED THAT HE WOULD BE WILLING TO RECEIVE
WESTINGHOUSE OFFICIALS IF THEY WISH TO DISCUSS MATTER
WITH HIM PERSONALLY. FOR ITS PART, DABBAS SAID THAT
JORDAN TAKES AN OPENMINDED APPROACH TO BOYCOTT ISSUES
AND ANY FURTHER DISCUSSION OF LETTER TO WESTINGHOUSE
WOULD BE APPROACHED BY JORDAN WITH THIS ATTITUDE.
HOWEVER, HE ALSO EMPHASIZED THAT FOR POLITICAL REASONS
JORDAN IS NOT IN POSITION TO TAKE ANY INITIATIVES
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REGARDING RELAXATION OF ARAB BOYCOTT OF ISRAEL BECAUSE
OF INEVITABLE SEVERE CRITICISM FROM ARAB STATES WHOSE
GOVERNMENTS PURSUE BOYCOTT MORE VIGOROUSLY. BY IMPLICATION,
LETTER TO WESTINGHOUSE, ONCE SENT, CANNOT BE OFFICIALLY
WITHDRAWN.

2. COMMENT -- AS INDICATED IN PARA 7 OF REFTEL A, SENIOR MINISTRY OF FINANCE OFFICIALS DO NOT FOLLOW ACTIVITIES OF LOCAL BOYCOTT OFFICE WITH GREAT ATTENTION. THAT OFFICE SERVES LARGELY AS CONDUIT FOR ROUTINE CIRCULATION OF DECISIONS OF CENTRAL BOYCOTT OFFICE IN DAMASCUS. WE BELIEVE THAT DABBAS FINDS LETTER TO WESTINGHOUSE UNFORTUNATE AND PERHAPS EMBARRASSING BUT IS UNABLE TO WITHDRAW IT OFFICIALLY. INSTEAD, HE CAME AS CLOSE AS HE COULD TO SAYING THAT GOJ HAS NO INTEREST IN PRESSING CASE AGAINST WESTINGHOUSE. ON OTHER HAND, IF ANOTHER ARAB STATE SUCH AS KUWAIT, ON WHICH JORDAN IS HEAVILY DEPENDENT FOR FINANCIAL AID, WOULD CHOOSE TO ATTACH SUFFICIENT IMPORTANCE TO WESTINGHOUSE CASE OR ANY OTHER SPECIFIC BOYCOTT ISSUE FOR THAT MATTER, GOJ WOULD BE EXCEEDINGLY HARD PUT TO RESIST PRESSURE THAT COULD BE APPLIED. IF WESTINGHOUSE OFFICIALS SHOULD WISH TO VISIT JORDAN TO PRESENT THEIR CASE TO GOJ, WE BELIEVE THAT DABBAS WOULD RECEIVE THEM CORDIALLY AND LISTEN ATTENTIVELY, BUT FOR REASONS HE OUTLINED TO AMBASSADOR, IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY HE WOULD BE WILLING TO COMMIT HIMSELF OR GOJ TO ANYTHING BEYOND SUBSTANCE OF HIS RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR'S INQUIRY. THE ABOVE COMES AS CLOSE AS WE CAN TO GETTING JORDANIANS TO DROP ACTION AGAINST WESTINGHOUSE. IN EFFECT ACTION SEEMS AT BEST IN DEEP FREEZE, BUT IF OTHER ARABS PUSH HARD JORDANIANS MAY FEEL FORCED TO PULL IT OUT AND TO PUSH ISSUE FARTHER.
PICKERING

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